Imām Ahl al-Sunnah

Mawlānā Muḥammad Sarfarāz Khān Ṣafdar

(1332-1430 AH/1914-2009 CE)

Foreword by Shaykh Mawlānā Muḥammad Saleem Dhorat

Abu 'Āṣim Badrul Islām

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Shaykh Mawlānā Muḥammad Saleem Dhorat[1]

My first acquaintance with Ḥaḍrat Mawlānā Muḥammad Sarfarāz Khān *Ṣafdar* sahib (may Allāh sanctify his soul) was when Ḥaḍrat had come to the UK to attend a conference as the chief guest and also visited Leicester during that trip. It was the sheer grace of Allāh that Ḥaḍrat's host called me and requested that I should make all necessary arrangements whilst Ḥaḍrat was in Leicester. I took this opportunity as an honour for myself and made arrangements for his stay at my late father's residence.

This was my first meeting with the honourable Ḥaḍrat Mawlānā Muḥammad Sarfarāz Khān *Ṣafdar* sahib and thereafter my love and respect for this luminary only increased as I continuously learnt of his academic status through his works, publications and other leading luminaries.

The honourable Ḥaḍrat has been amongst those great scholars from whom I have longed to seek *ijāzah* in *ḥadīth*, but have been unfortunate and this grief and sorrow will always remain with me.

Mawlānā Badrul Islam sahib, who has authored this short biography, is a graduate of Jāmi'ah Dār al-'Ulūm at Karachi and a *murīd* of the honourable Ḥaḍrat. Mawlānā is amongst those young *'ulamā* who are academic. He has much love for our pious predecessors and elders and also has much love and respect for me. Due to this love, after the honourable Ḥaḍrat's demise, I requested Mawlānā to write an article for our monthly Magazine, *Riyāḍul Jannah*, which would concisely highlight the life of the honourable Ḥaḍrat.

It has always been my endeavour and desire that the biographies of the eminent *'ulamā* of the Indian subcontinent be written in English for the benefit of the English speaking masses who would otherwise be unable to realise the

[1] *Khalīfah* of Shaykh Mawlānā Muḥammad Yūsuf Ludhyānwī *Shahīd*; founder and *Shaykh al-Ḥadīth*, Jami'ah Riyāḍ al-'Ulūm; founder, Islāmic Da'wah Academy (Leicester, England); editor, *Riyāḍul Jannah* Magazine.

lofty status of these eminent scholars directly from their Urdu and Arabic works. I was pleased that Mawlānā took up this request and now this short article has taken the form of a very informative yet concise booklet.

My knowledge and vision of the honourable Ḥaḍrat was that of an Islāmic academic and a man of spirituality and piety. Despite having only one occasion of meeting him, my admiration and respect for the honourable Ḥaḍrat ever remained. Nevertheless, having read this book, many other aspects of the honourable Ḥaḍrat has now come to light and the sorrow of not having the opportunity of benefiting from his company only remains.

I pray that Allāh *ta'ālā* accepts this endeavour of Mawlānā Badrul Islam sahib, makes it beneficial for the readers and a means of salvation for him and grant the honourable Ḥaḍrat a place in the *A'lā 'Illiyyīn*. Āmīn.

Muḥammad Saleem Dhorat
Islāmic Da'wah Academy
Leicester, UK.

Foreword 2

Mawlānā Ismaeel Nakhuda

It was during a lesson on Imām al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* that the renowned *ustādh* of *ḥadīth* at the Dār al-'Ulūm at Deoband and freedom fighter *Shaykh al-Islām* Mawlānā Sayyid Ḥusayn Aḥmad Madani (1879-1957) saw a student, late for the lecture, crossing the rows at which he said, "*Ṣafdar* is coming. This is the *ṣafdar* who will, *inshā Allāh*, separate the *ṣaff* (row) of [the people of] truth from that of [the people of] falsehood." It was a foretelling that came true — this Pathan student later became *Imām Ahl al-Sunnah* Mawlānā Muḥammad Sarfarāz Khān *Ṣafdar* (1914-2009).

Reading the life of 'Allāmah Muḥammad Sarfarāz Khān *Ṣafdar* reminds one of those *'ulamā* of a bygone era. As a meticulous researcher, expert in *ḥadīth* and *tafsīr*, prolific writer and *ṣūfī shaykh* in the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqah*, 'Allāmah *Ṣafdar* was at the forefront of serving Islām, piety, research and defending the Ahl al-Sunnah. Living up to the ripe-old age of 95, 'Allāmah *Ṣafdar* authored around 160 books, second most among Deobandī *'ulamā* after *Ḥakīm al-Ummah* Mawlānā Ashraf 'Ali Thānawī. His writings have enjoyed widespread acceptance among leading scholars of South Asia, so much so that even learned men of knowledge such as Muftī Muḥammad Taqī Usmānī take pride in possessing all his works.

A close confidant of many leading *'ulamā* in Pakistan, 'Allāmah *Ṣafdar* was the embodiment of a rare breed of scholar-cum-ṣūfī — a notable trait among those affiliated with the Deobandī *maslak* — and was *bay'ah* to *Shaykh al-Qur'ān* Mawlānā Husayn 'Alī, a student of *Imām Rabbānī* Mawlānā Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī.

This biography is a rare treat for those wanting to read about a genre of Islāmic scholars whose life stories are still largely untold in the English medium. Mawlānā Abu 'Āṣim Badrul Islām, himself a *murīd* of the late *'Allāmah*, has taken the time to write this beautiful and heartwarming short biography that readers will *inshā Allāh* take delight to absorb themselves in.

"This is the ṣafdar who will, inshā Allāh, separate the ṣaff (row) of [the people of] truth (ḥaqq) from that of [the people of] falsehood (bāṭil)."

(Shaykh al-Islām Mawlānā Sayyid Ḥusayn Aḥmad Madani, 1296-1377 AH/1879-1957 CE)

Childhood and education

Sometime in 1332 AH (1914 CE) in a little known village within the Mansehra district of the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan was born a child who would grow up to be the unparalleled master of the Ahl al-Sunnah wa 'l-Jamā'ah and an iconic figure in combating *bid'ah* and misguidance in all its guises within the Muslim *Ummah*; a child in front of whom, during the latter part of his almost century-long life, the most eminent of *'ulamā* would humble themselves and would consider it a great honour to have their names included in the list of his thousands of students who would be flocking toward him from all parts of the globe.

Born in a family known for its strict adherence to Islām and exceptional hospitality, Imām Mawlānā Muḥammad Sarfarāz Khān *Ṣafdar* began his primary Islāmic education in his locality before travelling to the Punjab for further education. After completing his primary and intermediate level education in 1939 CE, he and his younger brother, 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, who, later in life, would come to be known as Shaykh Ṣūfi 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Sawāti, set off for the prestigious '*al-Azhar* of the East', the Dār al-'Ulūm at Deoband (India). He excelled in his studies, surpassing all his fellow students and, thus, winning the attention and affection of his legendary teachers at the Dār al-'Ulūm.[2]

[2] Mawlānā Dr. 'Abd al-Razzāq Iskandar, *Imām Ahl al-Sunnah, al-Muḥaddith al-Kabīr - Muḥammad Sarfarāz Khān Ṣafdar* (Arabic), in the *Monthly al-Sharī'ah*, special edition (Gujrānwāla, 2009).

Imām Mawlānā Muḥammad Sarfarāz Khān *Ṣafdar* would himself later explain how he was given the title *Ṣafdar*. During his student days at the Dār al-'Ulūm, he was once late for a *ḥadīth* lecture. Upon arrival at the lecture hall, he made his way to his usual place at the front by skipping the rows of fellow students. He says, "Seeing this, my revered teacher *Shaykh al-'Arab wa 'l-'Ajam*[3] Mawlānā

[3] Meaning 'the *shaykh* of the Arab and the non-Arab world', this is a title that was given to *Shaykh al-Islām* Mawlānā Sayyid Ḥusayn Aḥmad Madani by the leading *'ulamā* of undivided India.

Born in Bāngar, Mao, the Indian district of Annow on 19 Shawwāl 1296 AH (5 October 1879 CE), the *Shaykh al-Islām* began his primary Islāmic education in Faizābād. At the age of twelve he travelled to the Dār al-'Ulūm at Deoband where he studied the intermediate and higher level books of the traditional *Dars-e-Niẓāmī* course. During his seven and a half years at the Dār al-'Ulūm the *Shaykh al-Islām* studied about sixty books, twenty four of which were taught by the legendary *imām* of undivided India, *Shaykh al-Hind* Mawlānā Maḥmūd al-Ḥasan Deobandī (1268-1339 AH/1851-1920 CE). He describes in his two-volume Urdu autobiography (*Naqsh-e-Ḥayāt – A Sketch of My Life*) how, as a young student at the Dār al-'Ulūm, he was very close to Imām *Shaykh al-Hind* and had free access to the latter's home. Similar affection was shown by all his illustrious teachers at the Dār al-'Ulūm.

As a young *'ālim*, the *Shaykh al-Islām* offered his allegiance of *taṣawwuf* (*bay'ah*) at the blessed hands of the *imām* of his age, dubbed 'the Abū Ḥanīfah of the era', *Shaykh al-Mashāyikh* Mawlānā Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī (1244-1323 AH/1829-1905 CE). In 1316 AH (1898 CE) he travelled with his parents and siblings to the radiant city of Madīnah al-Munawwarah, where his father, Sayyid Ḥabībullāh, settled permanently in fulfilment of his yearning to undertake *hijrah*. On their way to Madīnah al-Munawwarah, the family spent some days in the blessed company of the master of all the Indian *mashāyikh* of his age, the *shaykh* of *Shaykh al-Mashāyikh* Mawlānā Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī, Ḥājī Imdādullāh *Muhājir Makkī* (1233-1317 AH/1817-1899 CE) in the Holy city of Makkah al-Mukarramah, who prescribed the litany (*wird/waẓīfah*) of *Pās anfās* to the *Shaykh al-Islām*. In 1318 AH (1900 CE) the *Shaykh al-Islām* and his eldest brother, Mawlānā Sayyid Muḥammad Ṣiddīq (1288-1331 AH/1871-1913 CE), were summoned to India by *Shaykh al-Mashāyikh* Mawlānā Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī. Shortly after arrival, Imām Gangohī wrapped *'imāmahs* (turbans) around their heads and granted them formal *khilāfah* (or *ijāzah*) in *taṣawwuf*. They both remained in India for two years before returning to Madīnah al-Munawwarah with a group of *ḥājis*.

When the *Shaykh al-Islām* and his family embarked on their very long and perilous journey to Madīnah al-Munawwarah, his beloved teacher, *Shaykh al-Hind* Mawlānā Maḥmūd al-Ḥasan, walked with them to the train station. He advised the *Shaykh al-Islām* never to give up teaching the Islāmic sciences, wherever he may be and whatever the circumstances. He held fast to this advice. Once settled in Madīnah al-Munawwarah, despite the severe tribulations that he and his family underwent, the *Shaykh al-Islām* began teaching some books of the Islāmic sciences in the Masjid of the Beloved Messenger of Allāh (may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him). In the sections of his biography detailing his academic pursuits in Madīnah al-Munawwarah, he describes his surprise at the relatively poor academic abilities of those who were lecturing in the Holy Masjid at the time, compared with what he had been accustomed to in India. No sooner had he commenced his lectures on the various Islāmic sciences that his fame spread far and wide. Students began to desert the other lecturers and flocked to his lectures. They would marvel at the depth and richness of his oceanic knowledge of all the Islāmic sciences and his grounding in the *fiqh* of all four schools of sacred law. Consequently, he found himself the target of much envy and malice. Students – many of them of Madīnan, Turkish, Bukhārī, Qāzānī, Kazakhī, Egyptian and Afghānī origins - would find themselves mesmerized by his lectures on a wide spectrum of texts, many of which he himself had not studied previously, including in *'ilm al-Naḥw*

(grammar) the *Ājrūmiyyah*, *Ḥallān*, *Kafrāwī*, *Alfiyyah*, *Sharḥ Ibn 'Aqīl*, *Sharḥ Alfiyyah Ibn Hishām*; in *'ilm al-Ma'ānī wa'l-Bayān* (the science of Arabic eloquence) *Sharḥ 'Uqūd al-Jumān*, *Risālah Isti'ārāt*, *Risālah Waḍ'iyyah li 'l-Qāḍī*, *'Aḍud* etc; in *'ilm al-Badī'* (another branch of Arabic eloquence) *Badī'yyat Ibn Ḥajar*; in Ḥanafī *fiqh Nūr al-Īḍāḥ*, *Multaqa 'l-Abḥur*, *Durar* etc; in the jurisprudence of the Shāfi'ī and Mālikī schools *Sharḥ Jam' al-Jawāmi' li 'l-Subkī*, *Sharḥ Muṣtafā 'l-Uṣūl*, *Waraqāt*, *Sharḥ Muntahā 'l-Uṣūl* etc; in *'aqā'id* (Islāmic creed) *Musāmarah Sharḥ Musāyarah*, *Sharḥ Ṭawāli' al-Anwār*, *Jawharah* etc; in *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth* (principles and technicalities of *ḥadīth*) *Alfiyyah Uṣūl al-Ḥadīth*, *Bayqūniyyah* etc and many other texts in the sciences of *farā'iḍ* (law of inheritance), *mantiq* (logic), *tafsīr* (exegesis of the Holy Qur'ān), *ḥadīth* (Prophetic traditions) and *kalām* (theology). Due to the ever increasing insistence of students, he would deliver fourteen lectures a day – five in the morning, three or four after Ẓuhr prayers, two after 'Aṣr prayers, two after Maghrib prayers and one after 'Ishā' prayers. He would only sleep for three to three and a half hours, sometimes suspending all lectures and sleeping for six to seven hours, thereby refreshing himself for a full week. All this he did without any form of remuneration, upon the guidance of his spiritual mentor, *Shaykh al-Mashāyikh* Mawlānā Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī.

Circumstances of the Muslims of India compelled the *Shaykh al-Islām* to return to India. There, under the leadership of his illustrious teacher, *Shaykh al-Hind* Mawlānā Maḥmūd al-Ḥasan, he dedicated himself to the nationwide movement for freedom from the British Raj. In 1335 AH (1917 CE) he and *Shaykh al-Hind* were arrested in the *Ḥijāz* (in modern day Saudi Arabia) and incarcerated by the British in Malta. After his release in 1338 AH (1920 CE), he became even more dedicated to the fight for India's freedom from colonialism. When *Shaykh al-Hind* passed away that same year, the *Shaykh al-Islām* continued his illustrious teacher's struggle for India's independence and in 1360 AH (1941 CE) was appointed president of the Jam'iyyat al-'Ulamā' of India, a role in which he served until his demise in 1377 AH (1957 CE).

Upon the final instruction of his beloved teacher, *Shaykh al-Hind*, the *Shaykh al-Islām* taught *ḥadīth* at a Madrasah in Calcutta for a short period before moving to Sylhet (in modern day Bangladesh), where he taught *ḥadīth*, served as the prime and unparalleled spiritual mentor of the Muslims of the region and carried on his mission to see an independent India. In 1346 AH (1927 CE), he accepted the post of grand *shaykh* of the Dār al-'Ulūm at Deoband – *Shaykh al-Ḥadīth*. An estimated 3,856 students studied *ḥadīth* under him. Many thousands of Muslims pledged the allegiance of *taṣawwuf* (*bay'ah*) at his hands, from whom a total of 166 were granted formal *khilāfah* (or *ijāzah*) in *taṣawwuf* by the *Shaykh al-Islām*.

After the independence of India, the *Shaykh al-Islām* distanced himself from politics and devoted all his time and energy on the teaching of *ḥadīth*, spiritually reforming the Muslims and *da'wah*. In recognition of his sacrifices for India, in 1373 AH (1954 CE) the government wished to confer the *Shaykh al-Islām* an honorary official title. He declined, saying that the acceptance of such an award was contrary to the way of his pious predecessors (the *Salaf* and *Akābir*).
His sacrifices and selflessness for the people of India generally, and for the Muslims of India specifically, remain till this day unparalleled. His legacy remains alive today throughout the breadth and width of not just south Asia, but the world.

This legendary master passed away in 1377 AH (1957 CE) at his home in Deoband. His funeral prayer was led by the great *Shaykh al-Ḥadīth* Mawlānā Muḥammad Zakariyyā Kāndhlawī (1315-1402 AH/1898-1982 CE). He was laid to rest beside his teacher *Shaykh al-Hind* Mawlānā Maḥmūd al-Ḥasan and Imām *Ḥujjat al-Islām* Mawlānā Muḥammad Qāsim Nānotwī (1248-1297 AH/1833-1880 CE), the founder of the Dār al-'Ulūm, within its precincts in Deoband.

(References: *Shaykh al-Islām* Mawlānā Sayyid Ḥusayn Aḥmad Madanī, *Naqsh-e-Ḥayāt – A Sketch of my Life*; 'Allāmah 'Abd al-Ḥayy ibn Fakhr al-Dīn al-Ḥasanī and Imām Sayyid Abu 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī al-Nadwī, *Al-I'lām bi man fī Tārīkh al-Hind min al-A'lām*; Mawlānā Bāyazīd Maḥmūd Shahīd, *Akhlāq-e-Ḥusaynī*.)

Sayyid Ḥusayn Aḥmad Madani exclaimed, '*Ṣafdar*[4] is coming'. All my fellow students smiled at this. *Shaykh al-ʿArab wa 'l-ʿAjam* continued, 'This is the *ṣafdar* who will, inshā Allāh, separate the *ṣaff* (row) of [the people of] truth (*ḥaqq*) from that of [the people of] falsehood (*bāṭil*).'"[5] A statement that had been made by the blessed tongue of a *walī* of Allāh, Most Majestic, later proved its acceptance by the Divine Grace before the eyes of the entire world. Such is His treatment of His *awliyā'*.

Humble possessor of a mighty pen

Describing Imām Mawlānā *Ṣafdar*, ʿAllāmah Muftī Muḥammad Taqī Usmānī[6] writes:

'Some personalities are endowed by Allāh, Most High and Glorious, with such love in the hearts of others and common acceptance that just the thought of them brings tranquillity to the heart. Even if personal interaction with them be scarce, their mere existence is a means of great comfort. Our revered elder, the teacher of all, Ḥaḍrat Mawlānā Muḥammad Sarfarāz Khān *Ṣafdar* sahib (may Allāh sanctify his soul) was such a personality, whom we have now lost. *Indeed we are for Allāh, and to Him is our return.*

[4] A Persian word meaning the one who cuts through, or separates, rows.

[5] Mawlānā M Yūsuf, *Wilādat se takmīl-e-taʿlīm tak*, in the *Weekly Wazārat* (Lahore, 5-12 May 2009).

[6] Born in the town of Deoband (U.P., India) in 1362 AH (1943 CE), ʿAllāmah Muftī Muḥammad Taqī Usmānī is one of the most eminent scholars of Islām alive today. He was brought up and trained over a period of thirty years by his illustrious father, the legendary Imām ʿAllāmah Muftī Muḥammad Shafīʿ, the grand muftī of India and Pakistan consecutively, and the renowned author of *Tafsīr Maʿārif al-Qur'ān* (see: *Lamḥāt min Ḥayāt al-Qāḍī Muḥammad Taqī al-ʿUthmānī*, Karachi: Maktabah al-Ḥikmah, 1420 AH, pp. 11). Muftī Muḥammad Taqī Usmānī studied under some of the greatest *ʿulamā* and *mashāyikh* of the last century, all of whom granted him formal *ijāzāt* in the sciences of Islām. The depth of his knowledge of fiqh and its application can be gauged from the fact that one of his first formal published *fatāwā* was issued whilst he was still a student of the *Dars-e-Niẓāmi* course (before commencing the final *Dawra-e-ḥadīth* year) during 1378 AH (1959 CE) at the astonishing age of sixteen, which was checked and endorsed by his illustrious father who expressed his surprise and satisfaction at this in a written note added to the *fatwā* (see: *Fiqhī Maqālāt*, Karachi: Memon Islāmic Publishers, 1994, 2:33). Since then, he has been writing and lecturing extensively in Arabic, Urdu, [Persian] and English. His currently published works number to more than sixty, the largest and most splendid being his *Takmilah Fatḥ al-Mulhim bi Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Imām Muslim* in six large volumes, written over a period of eighteen years.

Beside his unparalleled grounding in the exoteric sciences of Islām, he is a leading master in the esoteric science of *taṣawwuf*, in which he has *ijāzah* from two of the leading masters of the last century, Shaykh Mawlānā Muḥammad Masīḥullāh Khān Sherwāni (Jalālābād, India) and Dr. ʿAbd al-Ḥayy *ʿĀrifī* (Karāchī, Pakistan), both of whom were *khulafā* of the legendary Imām *Ḥakīm al-Ummah* Mawlānā Ashraf ʿAli Thānwī (see: *Lamḥāt min Ḥayāt al-Qāḍī Muḥammad Taqī al-ʿUthmānī*, pp. 22-23, pp.53).

He had been bedridden for a long time and this had effectively restrained him from an active life. Opportunities to visit him and benefit from his company had been rare for distant ones like us, but his mere existence felt like a cool shade upon me in a very unique way; I knew that whenever the hustle and bustle of life would allow the opportunity, this blessed tree was there, extending its cool shade. Now, this shade is no longer upon us.

There now remain very few individuals in the world who had directly benefited from, and were honoured with, the blessed company of the great *ʿulamā* of Deoband and then spread their blessed legacies throughout the world. Ḥaḍrat Mawlānā Muḥammad Sarfarāz Khān *Ṣafdar* sahib (may Allāh sanctify his soul) was from amongst those fortunate men of learning who had gained the blessings of *Shaykh al-Islām* Mawlānā Sayyid Ḥusayn Aḥmad Madani, *Shaykh al-Adab* Mawlānā Iʿzāz ʿAli sahib and other great *ʿulamā* of that period (may Allāh sanctify their souls).

He has given accounts in his autobiography of the hardship he and his parents endured in gaining his primary [Islāmic] education, and how, after seeking knowledge in various parts of the Punjab, he set off for the Dār al-ʿUlūm at Deoband (India). Once there, he enrolled in the final year (*Dawra-e-ḥadīth*) class and was honoured to be taught by *Shaykh al-Islām* Mawlānā Sayyid Ḥusayn Aḥmad Madanī (may Allāh sanctify his soul). However, the *Shaykh al-Islām* was arrested and incarcerated later during that year for his role in the Indian liberation movement against British colonialism. In his absence, *Shaykh al-Adab* Mawlānā Iʿzāz ʿAli sahib (may Allāh sanctify his soul) taught the remainder of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.'[7]

Recalling how, as a young boy, he first became acquainted with the name of Imām Mawlānā *Ṣafdar*, ʿAllāmah Muftī Muḥammad Taqī Usmānī writes:

'I first came across the name of Ḥaḍrat Mawlānā Muḥammad Sarfarāz Khān *Ṣafdar* sahib (may Allāh sanctify his soul) when I was a student of the final two volumes of *al-Hidāyah*[8] and other books at the Dār al-ʿUlūm in Karachi. During

[7] ʿAllāmah Muftī Muḥammad Taqī Usmānī, *Shaykh al-Kull Ḥaḍrat Mawlānā Sarfarāz sahib Ṣafdar*, in the monthly *Al-Balāgh* (Karachi: Dār al-ʿUlūm Karachi, 2009).

[8] Written by Imām Burhān al-Dīn ʿAlī ibn Abī Bakr al-Marghīnānī (d. 593 AH/1197 CE), this is the most advanced text in Ḥanafī fiqh taught in the traditional *Dars-e-Niẓāmī* course. The handwritten lithographic edition of the book taught in Islāmic *madāris* throughout the world is split into four very large volumes. In most institutions, the first two volumes are taught separately in two years while the third and fourth volumes are taught in a single year. Modern computer typed editions of the book have

those days, the Dār al-ʿUlūm had been relocated from the city to a location in the desert near a village called Sharāfi Got.[9] We resided in the Dār al-ʿUlūm throughout the week and would return to our homes in the city [for the Islāmic weekend] on Thursday evenings. My revered father, Ḥaḍrat Mawlānā Muftī Muḥammad Shafīʿ sahib[10] (may Allāh sanctify his soul), had his personal

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been published in many volumes, the edition containing the splendid commentary of Imām Kamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wāḥid, better known as 'Ibn al-Humām', (d. 861 AH/1457 CE) being in ten large volumes.

[9] Later, when the city of Karachi expanded, this and far more remote areas became part of the city. Covering approximately fifty-six acres of land within its boundary walls, the Dār al-ʿUlūm is without doubt one of the most splendid and exemplary completely independent Islāmic institutions in the world today. It was founded by Imām ʿAllāmah Muftī Muḥammad Shafīʿ (d. 1396 AH/1976 CE) and over the decades it has seen great imāms of knowledge and piety teach there, including the likes of Shaykh Muftī Walī Ḥasan Tonkī, Shaykh Muftī Rashīd Aḥmad Ludhyānwī, Shaykh Muftī ʿĀshiq-e-Ilāhī Bulandshehrī Madanī, *Shaykh al-Ḥadīth* Mawlānā Salīmullāh Khān, *ʿĀrif billāh* Dr. ʿAbd al-Ḥayy *ʿĀrifi* (as president and mentor), *Shaykh al-Ḥadīth* Mawlānā Saḥbān Maḥmūd and Shaykh Mawlānā Shams al-Ḥaqq (may Allāh grant them all the highest Paradise). Today the president and chief muftī of the Dār al-ʿUlūm is Shaykh Muftī Muḥammad Rafīʿ Usmānī (grand muftī of Pakistan) and the vice-president and *Shaykh al-Ḥadith* is ʿAllāmah Muftī Muḥammad Taqī Usmānī, both illustrious sons of Imām ʿAllāmah Muftī Muḥammad Shafīʿ. The deputy muftīs are Shaykh Muftī Maḥmūd Ashraf Usmānī (grandson of Imām ʿAllāmah Muftī Muḥammad Shafīʿ), Shaykh Muftī ʿAbd al-Raʾūf Sakhkharwī and Mawlānā Muftī ʿAbd al-Mannān Sylhetī.

[10] The first grand muftī of Pakistan and a *khalīfah* of Imām *Ḥakīm al-Ummah* Mawlānā Ashraf ʿAli Thānwi, Imām Muftī Muḥammad Shafīʿ was one of the most eminent scholars who lectured and served as grand muftī at the Dār al-ʿUlūm in Deoband (India).

Born in Deoband in 1314 AH (1897 CE), he commenced Qurʾānic studies at the age of five. He studied Persian under his father, Mawlānā Muḥammad Yāsīn Deobandī (1282-1355AH/1865-1936 CE), and secular subjects under his uncle. He graduated at the age of twenty-two and was appointed to teach the lower levels of the *Dars-e-Niẓāmī* course at the Dār al-ʿUlūm, soon progressing to the higher levels. He taught at Deoband for twenty-seven years and served as the grand muftī of India prior to partition.

In 1943 CE, Imām Muftī Muḥammad Shafīʿ resigned from the Dār al-ʿUlūm due to his involvement in the Pakistan movement. When Pakistan came into existence, he migrated to Karachi, where in 1951 CE he established Dār al-ʿUlūm Karachi on the pattern of the Dār al-ʿUlūm at Deoband. The Dār al-ʿUlūm at Karachi is regarded today as the largest private institute of higher Islāmic education in Pakistan. His two sons, Shaykh Muftī Muḥammad Rafīʿ Usmānī and ʿAllāmah Muftī Muḥammad Taqī Usmānī are currently rectors, chief muftīs and senior professors of *ḥadīth* and Ḥanafī *fiqh* at the institute.

A prolific writer, Imām Muftī Muḥammad Shafīʿ authored approximately three hundred books on various Islāmic and literary subjects, his last being the immensely popular Urdu exegesis of the Holy Qurʾān entitled *Maʿārif al-Qurʾān*, which was completed four years before his demise and subsequently translated fully into Bengali and English. Besides his literary masterpieces, Imām Muftī Muḥammad Shafīʿ broadcasted the exegesis of the Holy Qurʾān on Radio Pakistan for a number of years.

Imām Muftī Muḥammad Shafīʿ attained a high rank in the science of *taṣawwuf*. He initially took the *bayʿah* at the hands of Imām *Shaykh al-Hind* Mawlānā Maḥmūd al-Ḥasan in 1920 CE. After Imām *Shaykh al-Hind*'s demise, Imām Muftī Muḥammad Shafīʿ continued the spiritual path for twenty-years under

library at home and it was my custom during the Friday weekend to browse through every book in the library. I would at least endeavour to look at the subject matter, details of the author and the literary style of each book. During one of these perusals, I came across three new books, the name of whose author was Mawlānā Muḥammad Sarfarāz Khān *Ṣafdar*. These books were written as refutation of various customary practices of *bidʿah* and heresy. I found the pages of these books replete with references from the books of *tafsīr*, *fiqh*, *ḥadīth* and *ʿaqāʾid*. Many references were from books that I had never heard of before. I instantly knew that this was a highly proficient research scholar who did not write anything without proper evidence and reference. This was the beginning of my love, reverence and admiration for [Ḥaḍrat Mawlānā Muḥammad Sarfarāz Khān *Ṣafdar* sahib]."[11]

Exegete of the Book of Allāh

During his annual *Dawra-e-tafsīr*, which would take place during the annual Ramaḍān – Shawwāl holidays of the Islāmic *madāris*, and which would be attended exclusively by *ʿulamā* (many of them from Īrān, Afghānistān, China, India, Bangladesh and other countries), Imām Mawlānā *Ṣafdar* would often say to his *ʿulamā* students, "I do not say anything without reference." His lectures in this *Dawra-e-tafsīr* would be replete with references from the books of *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, *ʿaqāʾid*, *lughah* and *tārīkh*. In explaining verses of the Holy Qurʾān, he would always cite the major books of *tafsīr*. In particular, he would mention *Tafsīr Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī*, *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, *Al-Durr al-Manthūr*, *Tafsīr Bayān al-Qurʾān* (Urdu), *Tafsīr Abi ʾl-Saʿūd*, *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr* (*Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*), *Al-Tafsīr al-Kashshāf*, *Maʿālim al-Tanzīl*, *Tafsīr al-Madārik*, *Tafsīr*

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the latter's famous student, Imām *Ḥakīm al-Ummah* Mawlānā Ashraf ʿAli Thānwī, who granted him *ijāzah*. Under Imām *Ḥakīm al-Ummah*'s supervision, he produced a number of outstanding works. Mawlānā Jamīl Aḥmad Thānwi states that Imām *Ḥakīm al-Ummah* had such reliance on Imām Muftī Muḥammad Shafīʿ's juristic acumen that he would even consult him in his personal matters. Imām *Ḥakīm al-Ummah* once said, "May Allāh lengthen the life of Muftī sahib, for, I achieve two joys due to him. Firstly, I acquire knowledge from him and, secondly, I have the satisfaction of knowing that after me there are people who will continue my work."

Imām Muftī Muḥammad Shafīʿ died in 1396 AH (1976 CE). It is estimated that over 100,000 people attended his funeral, which was led by Dr. ʿAbd al-Ḥayy *ʿĀrifi*, also a senior *khalīfah* of Imām *Ḥakīm al-Ummah*.

(Mawlānā Ismaeel Nakhuda)

[11] ʿAllāmah Muftī Muḥammad Taqī Usmānī, *Shaykh al-Kull Ḥaḍrat Mawlānā Sarfarāz sahib Ṣafdar*, in the monthly *Al-Balāgh* (Karachi: Dār al-ʿUlūm Karachi, 2009).

al-Khāzin, Sabq al-Ghāyāt, Bulghat al-Ḥayarān, Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, Tafsīr al-Bayḍāwī, Tafsīr-e-'Uthmānī (Fawā'id-e-'Uthmānī - Urdu), Ḥāshiyat al-Jamal 'alā 'l-Jalālayn, Ḥāshiyat al-Ṣāwī 'alā 'l-Jalālayn, Ḥāshiyat al-Kamālayn 'alā 'l-Jalālayn, Mawāhib al-Raḥmān, Tafsīr-e-Ḥaqqānī (Urdu), Al-Tafsīr al-Maẓharī and Aḥkām al-Qur'ān li 'l-Jaṣṣāṣ.* He would sometimes quote from the famous *tafsīr* of Imāms Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūti and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥalli, *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, verbatim from memory. He would then ask any student who had a copy of *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* to check whether what he had cited was correct. The student would refer to the book and confirm that it was indeed correct. He would often say to the *'ulamā*, "What I am teaching you now is all from memory. I do not have the time or the health nowadays to study the books of *tafsīr* as I used to. Inshā Allāh, if you were to refer to the books of *tafsīr*, you will find very little discrepancy in what I am saying to you. During my youth days, I would spend entire days and nights studying all the major books of *tafsīr*."[12] Similar was the case with his lectures on the major books of *ḥadīth*, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhāri* being his speciality during the latter part of his life. Transcripts of his invaluable lectures in Urdu on the major books of *ḥadīth* have seen repeated publications during his lifetime and serve as treasure-troves for students of *ḥadīth*. His exegesis of the Holy Qur'ān, taken from the annual *Dawra-e-tafsīr*, is currently being prepared for publication. Entitled *Dhakhīrat al-Jinān*,[13] when completed, it is anticipated to be in some twenty-five to thirty-five volumes.

Absolute trust in the *Akābir*

Despite his oceanic knowledge of all the Islāmic sciences, he always adhered to, and fully relied upon, the opinions of the great *'ulamā* of Deoband and their predecessors – the *Akābir*. He always gave preference to the opinions of the *Akābir* over his own. He often said, "I have studied and engaged in research for sixty five years. There is hardly a matter or *mas'alah* that has escaped my research and study, but I have always given preference to the opinions of the *Akābir* over my own knowledge and opinion."[14] He once said, "I have never issued a *fatwā* based on my own opinion. In whatever I have ever stated or

[12] Audio recordings of the annual *Dawra-e-tafsīr*.
[13] At the time of typing this (March 2010), I am informed by Imām *Ṣafdar*'s grandson, Mawlānā 'Ammār Khān Nāṣir, that so far work on nine volumes has been completed, covering the *tafsīr* of *sūrah al-Fātiḥah* to *al-Tawbah*.
[14] Mawlānā Muḥammad Ayyūb *Ṣafdar*, *Shaykh-e-Kāmil*, in the *Monthly al-Sharī'ah*, special edition (Gujrānwāla, 2009).

written, I have always followed the research and opinions of the *Akābir*."[15] Once, advising his students, he said, "Never leave the way of the *Akābir*. I have studied for sixteen years and taught for fifty two years, but never have I desired to leave the way of the *Akābir*. Whenever questions have arisen regarding any matter, I have referred to the works of the *Akābir*. By the grace of Allāh, I have spent more than half a century in teaching *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, *fiqh* and other sciences. Not once have I given preference to my own research and findings; I have always given preference to the opinions of the *Akābir*. Dear students, do not attempt your own *ijtihād* in matters; rely upon the opinions of the *Akābir*. Do not leave their way."[16]

Immaculate self-discipline of an incomparable master

Imām Mawlānā *Ṣafdar*'s respect toward knowledge, the books of knowledge and the imparting of knowledge was absolutely profound. During the annual *Dawra-e-tafsīr*, the session would begin at precisely eight o'clock each morning and end at twelve noon. During these four hours, he would lecture on approximately a *juz'* (one thirtieth) of the Holy Qur'ān without interruption. He would not even change his posture during this time, let alone get up and leave the room. As for the students, mesmerised by the eloquent, in-depth, thoroughly referenced lecture of Imām *Ṣafdar*, they would not notice how these four hours flew by.[17]

'Allāmah Muftī Muḥammad Taqī Usmānī continues:

'Works of [Ḥaḍrat Mawlānā Muḥammad Sarfarāz Khān *Ṣafdar* sahib] continued to arrive regularly. The deep insight and thorough research of the author were manifest in each one of them. Whichever subject he wrote on, Ḥaḍrat presented to the reader satisfying and thorough research, which left no stone unturned. These works were mainly on contentious issues that have for long been the cause of serious tensions between the Deobandi and Barelwi[18] *'ulamā*,

[15] Mawlānā Ḥāfiẓ Gulzār Aḥmad Āzād, *Dō mithāli bhai*, in the *Monthly al-Sharī'ah*, special edition (Gujrānwāla, 2009).
[16] Ḥāfiẓ Nisār Aḥmad al-Ḥusayni, *Imām-e-Ahl-e-Sunnat: chand yādēn, chand ta'aththurāt*, in the *Monthly al-Sharī'ah*, special edition (Gujrānwāla, 2009).
[17] *Ibid.*
[18] Referred to as the 'Barelwis' and very misleadingly 'Sunnis' in India and Pakistan, and the variants found in Bangladesh as 'Rezvis' and 'Fultolis', these are Muslims who follow mainly the Ḥanafi school of sacred law but engage in acts of deviancy and heresy on certain matters and hold such beliefs,

or between the Deobandi and Ahl-e-Ḥadīth[19] *'ulamā*. The entire society had been engulfed in these tensions, and many a scholar had adopted an unpleasant and hostile style in these debates and refutations. The works of Ḥaḍrat Mawlānā generally remained free of such unpleasantness and hostility and his style was highly academic. May Allāh reward him well.

Although I was familiar with Ḥaḍrat Mawlānā through his works and had much love and reverence for him, it was not until 1968 CE, when I had visited Gujrānwāla for the very first time, that I had the honour of actually meeting him. The Institute of Islāmic Research (Idārah-e-Taḥqīqāt-e-Islāmī) in Rāwalpindī had organised an international conference, which my revered father was also to attend. I went with him. After the conference, foreign guests were taken to Lahore by road. I was included in the entourage as an interpreter for some of the notables. This entourage stopped on the way at Gujrānwāla. In the honour of these guests, a conference was held by Ḥaḍrat Mawlānā in Madrasah Nuṣrat al-'Ulūm. It was on this occasion that I first had the honour of seeing him. I found him to be completely different to the image that I had sketched in my mind from reading his works. He was extremely simple, humble and spoke little. Ḥaḍrat Mawlānā presented certificates of gratitude to all the honourable guests. I was a twenty five year old student at the time[20], but due to my revered father (may Allāh sanctify his soul) he treated me with tremendous affection.

Thereafter, by the grace of Allāh, I was able to satisfy myself by meeting Ḥaḍrat and expressing my love and reverence on many occasions. I even had the opportunity to visit him at his home. Ḥaḍrat visited Dār al-'Ulūm [Karachi] and granted its teachers *ijāzah* in *ḥadīth*[21]. When Ḥaḍrat's health deteriorated,

primarily on the issue of how a Muslim should love and venerate the blessed Messenger of Allāh (may the infinite peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him).

[19] Usually referred to as the 'Salafis' here in the West, these are Muslims who do not follow, or usually deem unlawful, the exclusive following of any of the established schools of sacred law, namely, the Ḥanafi, Māliki, Shāfi'i and Ḥanbali schools of the Ahl al-Sunnah wa 'l-Jamā'ah.

[20] Needless to point out, 'Allāmah Muftī Muḥammad Taqī Usmānī is referring to himself as a "student" only out of humility and practice of true Islāmic *adab*, for, he is a recognised master in the Islāmic sciences who had issued his first written *fatwā* at the tender age of sixteen (see footnote 5).

[21] One such visit was on 24 Ṣafar 1423 AH (8 May 2002 CE) when Imām Mawlānā Muḥammad Sarfarāz Khān *Ṣafdar* paid what was to us an unannounced visit to the Dār al-'Ulūm. We were students in the seventh year of the *Dars-e-Niẓāmi* course, studying the *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ* and other books. All classes in the Dār al-'Ulūm were suspended and all students and staff congregated in the old masjid. The *Shaykh* was requested to deliver a short lecture on *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhāri* as way of blessing for the final year students of the *Dawra-e-ḥadīth* class. The *Shaykh* was very frail and ill at the time. He was seated at the front of the masjid and to the amazement of all present, instead of one of the students of the *Dawra-e-ḥadīth*

Mawlānā Muftī Muḥammad Jamīl Khān *Shahīd* sahib brought him to Karachi for treatment and earned the good fortune of serving him. On this occasion too, I visited him and he showered his affection upon me.

With regard to his children too, Allāh, Most Majestic, had blessed him to an enviable degree. His sons are worthy inheritors of his knowledge, particularly Mawlānā Zāhid al-Rāshidi (may Allāh protect him) who, beside knowledge and virtue, has been gifted with an immense fervour to serve Islām, possessing deep and meaningful thought, a serious and perceptive approach to matters. He is well-read on Western thoughts and ideologies. His fervent analysis on this is a guiding torch for the younger generations.

By his temperament, Ḥaḍrat Mawlānā Muḥammad Sarfarāz Khān *Ṣafdar* sahib (may Allāh sanctify his soul) was a man of study, research and teaching, but whenever the need arose for the [Islāmic] nation to engage in physical struggle, he sacrificed this academic temperament and was at the forefront. Thus, during the *Khatm-e-Nubuwwat*[22] campaign of 1953 CE, he took a very active role, bearing the hardship of imprisonment. Even in prison, his *da'wah* and *tablīgh* activities continued unhampered.'[23]

class reading the text of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhāri* to the *Shaykh* (as is the norm on such occasions), the grand *shaykh* of the Dār al-'Ulūm, 'Allāmah Muftī Muḥammad Taqī Usmānī, humbled himself in front of the *Shaykh* and asked if he could read the text! To this the *Shaykh* smiled and said "Jazākallāh". 'Allāmah Muftī Muḥammad Taqī Usmānī read a portion of the text which was then explained by the *Shaykh*. This was an excellent illustration of the extraordinary *adab* and humility of the noble *'ulamā* of Islām. The *Shaykh* then granted *ijāzah* in *ḥadīth* to all the teachers and students of the *Dawra-e-ḥadīth* class. One of our teachers who taught us *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ* repeatedly asked that the *Shaykh* also grant us, the students of the *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ*, *ijāzah* in *ḥadīth*, but he refused, saying that this would be against his principle.

[22] Meaning the finality of prophethood of the last Messenger of Allāh, our most noble master Muḥammad ibn 'Abdillāh of the Quraysh of Makkah (d. 11 AH/632 CE – may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him). Whoever believes in any prophet to come after our master Muḥammad (may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) is, by consensus of the entire Muslim *Ummah*, a non-Muslim. The campaign being referred to by 'Allāmah Muftī Muḥammad Taqī Usmānī here is the nationwide campaign by the Muslims of Pakistan, pioneered by some of the greatest *'ulamā* ever born in south Asia, to successfully lobby the then government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to officially declare the followers of Mirza Ghulām Aḥmad Qādiyāni (d. 1908 CE), varyingly known as the 'Qadiyanis', 'Ahmadis', 'Mirza'is' and 'Ahmadiyyah Muslim Community/Jamā'at' (depending on which part of the world they are operating in). After much sacrifice by the Muslims of Pakistan and their illustrious *'ulamā*, followers of the Qādiyāni religion were eventually declared a non-Muslim minority in Pakistan. Other major Muslim countries of the world followed suit, including Saudi Arabia, where they remain banned from entering the sacred cities of Makkah and Madīnah, just like all other non-Muslims.

[23] 'Allāmah Muftī Muḥammad Taqī Usmānī, *Shaykh al-Kull Ḥaḍrat Mawlānā Sarfarāz sahib Ṣafdar*, in the monthly *Al-Balāgh* (Karachi: Dār al-'Ulūm Karachi, 2009).

Unparalleled works

Author of tens of highly academic works, Imām *Ṣafdar* is considered one of the most prolific research scholars of the last century. A striking feature of all his works is the originality and in-depth analysis that is absent in the works of many a scholar today. Mawlānā 'Abd al-Ḥaqq Khān Bashīr[24] lists forty-six such works of Imām *Ṣafdar* with brief synopses. They include:

Al-Kalām al-Ḥāwī fī Taḥqīq 'Ibārat al-Ṭaḥāwī (first impression: 1364 AH/1944 CE): This is Imām *Ṣafdar*'s very first work. Some eminent *'ulamā* had misunderstood certain texts in Imām Abū Ja'far al-Ṭaḥāwī's famous *Sharḥ Ma'ānī al-Āthār* to imply that the acceptance of zakāh by those belonging to the *sādāt (sayyids)* and *Banū Hāshim* is permissible. Such a ruling would be in opposition to the opinion held by the *'ulamā* of the Ahl al-Sunnah wa 'l-Jamā'ah. In this work, Imām *Ṣafdar* establishes with many evidences that such an implication was never the intention of Imām al-Ṭaḥāwī, and to infer such an opinion from his work is incorrect. In fact, Imām al-Ṭaḥāwī held exactly the same view as that of the rest of the Ahl al-Sunnah wa 'l-Jamā'ah – that of impermissibility. This work received the praise and comments of some of the *Akābir 'ulamā* of Deoband.

Ḍaw' al-Sirāj fī Taḥqīq al-Mi'rāj (first impression: 1368 AH/1948 CE): In this 48-page treatise, citing the Holy Qur'ān, *aḥādīth* and sayings of the *Salaf*, Imām *Ṣafdar* establishes that the Beloved Messenger of Allāh (may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) had physically ascended the heavens during the *Mi'rāj* – and not just a spiritual journey, as is claimed by some.

Tabrīd al-Nawāẓīr fī Taḥqīq al-Ḥāḍir wa 'l-Nāẓir (also known as ***Ānkhon ki Thandak*** – first impression: 1368 AH/1949 CE): Omnipresence is an attribute of only Allāh, Most Magnificent, and none share in this attribute. This is a fundamental belief of the Ahl al-Sunnah wa 'l-Jamā'ah. However, certain heretic groups believe that the Noble Prophets and *awliyā'* of Allāh enjoy a share of this Divine attribute. In its most recent edition, comprising 200 pages, Imām *Ṣafdar* proves with irrefutable evidences from the Holy Qur'ān and *aḥādīth* that such a belief is fundamentally contrary to Islām.

[24] Mawlānā 'Abd al-Ḥaqq Khān Bashīr, *Imām-e-Ahl-e-Sunnat ki Taṣānīf: Ēk Ijmālī Ta'āruf*, in the Monthly al-Sharī'ah, special edition (Gujrānwāla, 2009).

Dil ka Surūr (first impression: 1370 AH/1951 CE): In this work, citing evidences from the Holy Qur'ān, *aḥādīth*, the creed of the noble Companions and the imams of this *Ummah*, Imām *Ṣafdar* proves that only Allāh has absolute sovereignty and control over all things. It is only He who has the right to legislate (the *Sharī'ah*). No creation shares in this Divine attribute nor is the same conferred upon any creation by Allāh, Most Magnificent.

Mas'ala-e-Qurbānī (first impression: 1374 AH/1954 CE): This work was written in response to the heretic rejecters of *ḥadīth* (the self-labelled *Ahl al-Qur'ān*) who maintain that the sacrificing of animals during the tenth, eleventh and twelfth day of the month of Dhu 'l-Ḥijjah is unislāmic and a wastage. Using irrefutable evidences, Imām *Ṣafdar* also rebuts the claim by the so-called 'Ahl al-Ḥadīth' that the days of this sacrifice extends to the thirteenth day of the month of Dhu 'l-Ḥijjah.

Aḥsan al-Kalām fī Tark al-Qirā'at Khalf al-Imām (first impression: 1375 AH/1955 CE): The issue of whether one who prays behind an imām ought to recite *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* has always been one based on sound *ijtihād*, with both sides (those schools of sacred law that maintain the recitation of *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* by even the one who prays behind an imām is a requirement for the validity of his prayer and those that oppose this view) producing valid evidences. However, due to its *ijtihādi* nature the issue has never been treated as a divisive contention. Indeed this is the case with all the legal differences that exist within, and between, the four established schools of sacred law. Sadly, some quarters of the Indian 'Ahl al-Ḥadīth' (or 'Salafīs') launched a campaign, publishing and distributing literature condemning all those Muslims who do not recite *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* when praying behind an imām and claiming that the prayers of such Muslims were invalid. This implied that the prayers of all those great imāms of the Holy Qur'ān and Sunnah, who have passed in the history of Islām, and who were of the opinion that the one who prays behind an imām must not (or may not) recite *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* were null. Tens of books were written by the leading Ḥanafī *'ulamā* of the Indian subcontinent in response to this. Imām *Ṣafdar* wrote this unparalleled two-volume rebuttal of the false 'Ahl al-Ḥadīth' propagandists. In the first volume he establishes the firm evidences of the Ḥanafī school of sacred law and in the second volume he rebuts the deception of the propagandists one by one.

Ṣirf Ēk Islām - ba Jawāb-e-Dō Islām (first impression: 1375 AH/1955 CE): Dr. Ghulām Jīlānī Barq had joined the heretic movement of the rejecters of *ḥadīth* and had written two books entitled *Dō Islām* and *Dō Qur'ān*. The former book

was received by Imām *Ṣafdar* during his incarceration in Multan Central Jail for his involvement in the *Khatm-e-Nubuwwat* campaign. He read the book and wrote this rebuttal in prison, which was published upon his release. After reading this book Dr. Ghulām Jīlānī Barq realised the fallacy of his views and repented. He later wrote a book exposing the heresy of those who reject the authority of *ḥadīth*.

Al-Minhāj al-Wāḍiḥ* (*Rāh-e-Sunnat - first impression: 1377 AH/1957 CE): After *shirk* (associating partners with Allāh) the greatest sin in Islām is *bid'ah* (innovation in matters of the *Dīn* in contravention of the Holy Qur'ān, Sunnah, *ijmā'* of the Imāms of *ijtihād* and *qiyās* based on the Holy Qur'ān and Sunnah – see 'Allāmah Sayyid Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī's *Tāj al-'Arūs*, 20:309). Considered by many *'ulamā* as one the best books ever written on the topic, this work parallels Imām Abū Isḥāq al-Shāṭibī's monumental *al-I'tiṣām*. In the 311 pages of this work Imām *Ṣafdar* has explained the concept of *bid'ah* in light of the Holy Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* in an excellent and highly comprehensive style. After establishing the principles of the Holy Qur'ān and Sunnah in this regard, he has critically analysed some prevalent practices of *bid'ah* in the Indian subcontinent. In his highly powerful style Imām *Ṣafdar* mentions the arguments of some of the leading promoters and preachers of *bid'ah* in the Indian subcontinent, namely Muftī Aḥmad Yār Khān and his followers of the Barelwī sect, before exposing their misguidance and opposition to the principles of the Holy Qur'ān and Sunnah.

Izālat al-Rayb 'an 'Aqīdat 'Ilm al-Ghayb (first impression: 1379 AH/1959 CE): Just as omnipresence is an attribute of only Allāh, omniscience and possession of knowledge of the unseen is an attribute of only Allāh, Most Magnificent. Comprising 536 pages this work is another unparalleled masterpiece of Imām *Ṣafdar* in which he has refuted the evidences of those who are astray and seek to lead others astray on this issue, particularly, in relation to the knowledge that was possessed by the Noble Messenger of Allāh (may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him).

Maqām-e-Abī Ḥanīfah (first impression: 1381 AH/1962 CE): The imām of an estimated two thirds of the Muslim *Ummah*, Imām Abū Ḥanīfah has been the target of envy, malice, hatred, false propaganda and shameless character assassinations throughout the centuries. However, the so-called 'Ahl al-Ḥadīth' (or 'Salafīs') of this age seem to have surpassed all limits in this regard. In fully orchestrated and concerted ways they have spread their venom against *al-Imām al-A'ẓam* (the greatest imām) Abū Ḥanīfah to all parts of the world. Using

irrefutable historic evidences, Imām *Ṣafdar* has established the sublime status of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah in the sciences of *ḥadīth* and *fiqh*. He has rebutted the malicious allegations of the enemies of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah one by one. In his foreword to the book, the great *muḥaddith* of India, 'Allāmah Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān A'ẓamī, has described it as a monumental work. Imām Muftī Muḥammad Shafī', in his foreword to the book, states that he had been so disturbed by the false propaganda and malice against Imām Abū Ḥanīfah that he had been preparing material to author such a book himself. When Imām *Ṣafdar*'s work, *Maqām-e-Abī Ḥanīfah*, arrived and he read it, his wish to present such a work to the Muslim *Ummah* was fulfilled. He states, "Without any exaggeration, I can say that had I attempted myself, I would not have been able to produce such a comprehensive work. This book is absolutely sufficient in this topic." Imām 'Allāmah Sayyid Muḥammad Yūsuf Binnorī[25], in his foreword, after praising

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[25] Imām Mawlānā Sayyid Muḥammad Yūsuf Binnorī (1326-1397 AH/1906-1977 CE), a descendant of the Prophet (may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him), was born in the village of Mahabatabad near Peshāwar. An authority in *ḥadīth*, Imām Binnorī studied at the Dār al-'Ulūm at Deoband and graduated from Madrasah Ta'līm al-Dīn at Dabhel (India), where he studied *ḥadīth* under the phenomenal Imām 'Allāmah Sayyid Anwar Shāh Kashmīrī, becoming one of his most famous students.

He received his primary education from his father, Mawlānā Muḥammad Zakariyya Binnorī, and maternal uncle. He studied in Peshāwar and then traveled to Kābul. In 1927 CE he enrolled at the Dār al-'Ulūm at Deoband where he studied for two years before moving to Dabhel, where he completed the final year *dawra-e-ḥadīth* under Imām Kashmīrī and *Shaykh al-Islām* Mawlānā Shabbīr Aḥmad 'Uthmānī, the author of *Fatḥ al-Mulhim bi Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Imām Muslim*.

After graduation, Imām Binnorī remained in the service of Imām Kashmīrī. He then lived for a few years (1930-1934 CE) in his hometown of Peshāwar until requested to teach *ḥadīth* at Dabhel. He remained *shaykh al-ḥadīth* at Dabhel until the creation of Pakistan. He then went to the Dār al-'Ulūm at Tando Allāh Yār and then came to Karāchi where he founded the prestigious Madrasah 'Arabiyyah Islāmiyyah at what was later named Binnorī Town.

During his first ḥajj, he offered *bay'ah* to Mawlānā Shafī' al-Dīn Nagīnwī Makkī (the *khalīfah* of Ḥājī Imdādullāh *Muhājir Makkī*). After ḥajj, Imām Binnorī traveled to Cairo to supervise the publication of Imām Kashmīrī's commentary on Imām al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Fayḍ al-Bārī*, and Imām al-Zayla'ī's *Naṣb al-Rāyah*. During his stay there, Imām Binnorī contributed articles about the Dār al-'Ulūm at Deoband and its elders to Egyptian journals. It was during his stay there that Imām Binnorī developed close contacts with leading *'ulamā* in Egypt, including Imām Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī.

On his return to India, Imām Binnorī visited Imām *Ḥakīm al-Ummah* Mawlānā Ashraf 'Ali Thānwī, who became very impressed by him and later included him among his *mujāz-e-ṣuḥbah*.

'Allāmah Muftī Muḥammad Taqī Usmānī writes:

"Mawlānā Binnorī's (may Allāh have mercy upon him) personage was so heart soothing, enlightening, and full of beauty and solemnity that mentioning all his particulars in a short article is difficult. His figure was the bodily memory of his *shaykh*, 'Allāmah Sayyid Anwar Shāh Kashmīrī. The science of

the book, says regarding the author, "I have been hearing the good name of the *Mawlānā* (Imām *Ṣafdar*) for a long time now, but this book gave me the opportunity to understand [and appreciate] him." Indeed, this is one of the many unparalleled works of Imām *Ṣafdar*.

'Umdat al-Athāth fī Ḥukm al-Ṭalaqāt al-Thalāth (first impression: 1387 AH/1968 CE): In this work Imām *Ṣafdar* has established through conclusive evidences from the Holy Qur'ān, *aḥādīth* and verdicts of the majority of the great imāms of this *Ummah* that three *ṭalāqs* pronounced by a husband in one go (immediate triple *ṭalāq*) or without the proper interruption between each of the three does indeed effect three *ṭalāqs*, resulting in the absolute severance of the bond of marriage (*nikāḥ*). Imām *Ṣafdar* lists all the erroneous arguments of the so-called 'Ahl al-Ḥadīth' (or 'Salafīs') who, in opposition to the entire Muslim *Ummah* maintain that such a *ṭalāq* will only count as a single *ṭalāq*, and highlights the grave error of this.

Taskīn al-Ṣudūr fī Taḥqīq Aḥwāl al-Mawtā fī 'l-Barzakh wa 'l-Qubūr (first impression: 1388 AH/1968 CE): In 1958 CE Mawlānā Sayyid 'Ināyetullāh Shāh Bukharī launched his well-known campaign in which he sought to reject the belief of the Ahl al-Sunnah wa 'l-Jamā'ah on the life of the Noble Prophets of Allāh (may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon them) in their graves. Despite many reconciliatory attempts by the *'ulamā*, he refused to accept the

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ḥadīth was his speciality in which it is difficult to find his comparison. Like his *shaykh*, he was a treasure of information in every knowledge and science."

His most popular work is the splendid six-volume Arabic commentary on the *'ibādāt* portion of the *Jāmi'* of Imām Abu 'Īsā al-Tirmidhī entitled *Ma'ārif al-Sunan*. Allāh Most High took great work from the *Mawlānā* in refuting false (*bāṭil*) sects, and he was fully committed to the *Khatm al-Nubuwwah* movement. It was through his work and the work of a few other leading *'ulamā* that the Pakistani government was obliged to declare the Qādiānīs a non-Muslim minority.

'Allāmah Muftī Muḥammad Taqī Usmānī writes that Imām Binnorī would never remain silent from commenting on the views of those who, in interpreting the Holy Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*, adopted an understanding that was different from that of the majority of the *Ummah*. "The *Mawlānā* would remain particularly worried that the *maslak* (school of thought or way) of the *'ulamā* of Deoband did not become contaminated by erroneous views and that in matters of politics the *'ulamā* of Deoband's solidarity and cooperation with any individual is not taken to mean they are [necessarily] in agreement with [all] the views of that individual."

This pillar of sacred knowledge died of a heart attack while attending an Islāmic *Sharī'ah* conference in Pakistan on 3 Dhu 'l-Qa'dah 1397 AH.

(Mawlānā Ismaeel Nakhuda)

fact that all the Noble Prophets of Allāh are alive in their graves. In a meeting of the Council of the Jam'iyyat 'Ulamā' al-Islām in 1382 AH (1962 CE) Imām *Ṣafdar* was tasked with preparing a comprehensive book outlining the creed of the Ahl al-Sunnah wa 'l-Jamā'ah and the noble *'ulamā* of Deoband in this regard. Over a period of five years he prepared this work comprising 439 pages. Through conclusive evidences from the Holy Qur'ān, *aḥādīth* and verdicts of the great imāms of this *Ummah* he has established that the beloved Prophet of Allāh (may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) is alive in his grave and replies to salutations (*ṣalāt wa salām*) made near his blessed grave. This is the belief of the vast majority of the *'ulamā* of the Ahl al-Sunnah wa 'l-Jamā'ah and this is the belief of the noble *'ulamā* of Deoband. In his foreword to the book, 'Allāmah Qārī Muḥammad Ṭayyib, the legendary rector of the Dār al-'Ulūm in Deoband, states, "The reality is that *Taskīn al-Ṣudūr is taskīn al-ṣudūr* (tranquillity for bosoms) on this topic. It has brought tranquillity to my heart and soul." Similar words of praise, specifically for this work and generally for Imām *Ṣafdar*, have been used by the great *'ulamā* of the time in the other eighteen forewords contained in the book.

Yanābī' - Tarjama-e-Risālah-e-Tarāwīḥ (first impression: 1388 AH/1969 CE): Since the time of *Sayyiduna* 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (may Allāh be pleased with him), the *tarāwīḥ* prayer that is prayed during the holy month of Ramaḍān has always been prayed as twenty *raka'āt*. This has been the unanimous *fatwā* of all four schools in sacred law – the Ḥanafī, Mālikī, Shāfi'ī and Ḥanbalī schools. In their campaign of deception and confusion the so-called 'Ahl al-Ḥadīth' (or 'Salafīs') had rejected this consensus of the great imāms of this *Ummah*. Using a few ambiguous evidences, they had disregarded the overwhelming evidences from *ḥadīth* that prove twenty *raka'āt* is the established *sunnah* in the *tarāwīḥ* prayer, and argued for just eight *raka'āt*. Primarily an Urdu translation of Mawlānā Ghulām Rasūl's Persian work with a 16-page introduction by Imām *Ṣafdar*, this book proves that twenty *raka'āt* is the *sunnah* in the *tarāwīḥ* prayer and not eight.

Al-Kalām al-Mufīd fī Ithbāt al-Taqlīd (first impression: 1406 AH/1985 CE): *Taqlīd* or following an imām of *ijtihād* (that is, a fully qualified imām who has all the relevant knowledge and skills with which to derive commandments from the Holy Qur'ān and *aḥādīth* of the Noble Messenger of Allāh) has always been the norm for the Muslim *Ummah*. Since the early centuries of Islām, with the exception of perhaps a tiny minority, most of whom are unworthy of mention, Muslims have strictly followed the interpretation of any one of the four established schools of sacred law (the *Sharī'ah*) in matters of their *Dīn*. These

established and highly sophisticated legal schools are known as *madhāhib* (or *madhhabs*). They are the *Ḥanafī, Shāfi'ī, Mālikī* and *Ḥanbalī madhāhib*, named after their respective founders – Imām Abū Ḥanīfah Nu'mān ibn Thābit al-Kūfī (80-150 AH/699-767 CE), Imām Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī al-Qurashī (150-204 AH/767-819 CE), Imām Mālik ibn Anas al-Aṣbaḥī al-Madanī (93-179 AH/712-795 CE), Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal al-Shaybānī al-Baghdādī (164-241 AH/781-855 CE) (may Allāh be pleased with all of them).

Although admittedly there have always been (usually lone) callers to the discarding of adherence to *madhāhib*, in recent times due to a number of reasons the movement has gained popularity in various communities of Muslims, especially amongst the more energetic and inexperienced younger generations. In reminiscence of the deceptive call of "*In al-ḥukm illā lillāh*" (sovereignty is for only Allāh) by the *Khawārij* rebels who had rejected the authority of *Amīr al-Mu'minīn Sayyiduna* 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (may Allāh be pleased with him), the callers to non-*madhhabism* use appealing slogans like "Let us follow the Messenger of Allāh and not Abū Ḥanīfah". In response one can only say what *Sayyiduna* 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib said when he came to hear of the slogan of the heretic *Khawārij* – "*Kalimatu ḥaqq, urīda bihā 'l-bāṭil*" (a word of truth, but the intention is foul). Indeed, in order to expose this foul and poisonous motive of the callers to non-*madhhabism*, highly regarded scholars like the contemporary Shaykh Dr. Sa'īd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī of Damascus have authored books with challenging titles such as his *Al-Salafiyyah: Marḥalah Zamaniyyah, Lā Madhhab Islāmiyy* (*Salafism: A Phase in History, not a school in Islāmic Law*), *Al-Lā Madhhabiyyah: Akhṭaru Bid'ah Tuhaddidu al-Sharī'ah al-Islāmiyyah* (*Non-Madhhabism: The Most Dangerous Bid'ah that Threatens the Islāmic Sharī'ah*) and *Al-Lā Madhhabiyyah: Qinṭarat al-Lā Dīniyyah* (*Non-Madhhabism: The Bridge to Atheism*).

A ludicrous irony of the call to non-*madhhabism* is that all the great masters of *ḥadīth* to whom the entire Muslim *Ummah* is indebted, and without whose great works the library of *ḥadīth* literature would be left empty, and whom the pioneers of the non-*madhhabism* movement also hold as the greatest authorities in *ḥadīth*, were all strict adherents and promoters of their respective *madhāhib*. This is a fact not hidden to even the least knowledgeable student of *ḥadīth* and *fiqh*. Upon closer inspection and scrutiny it becomes evident that the callers to non-*madhhabism* are in reality practising *taqlīd* themselves. The only difference between their *taqlīd* and that of other Muslims is that they are following the verdicts of contemporary, or often medieval, *'ulamā'* while the *Ḥanafī, Shāfi'ī, Mālikī* and *Ḥanbalī* Muslims follow the verdicts of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, Imām al-Shāfi'ī, Imām Mālik, Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal

and their closest students who helped develop their respective *madhāhib* (may Allāh be pleased with all of them).

Comprising 341 pages, this work of Imām *Ṣafdar* is probably the most comprehensive critique and exposé of the non-*madhhabism* movement in any language. In his powerful style, using clear evidences from the Holy Qur'ān, *aḥādīth*, verdicts of the great imāms of this *Ummah*, works of the legendary masters in the sciences of Islām and history, Imām *Ṣafdar* unmasks the deception of the seemingly sincere call to the Sunnah by the non-*madhhabists*.

Iḥsān al-Bārī li Fahm al-Bukhārī (first impression: 1408 AH/1988 CE): This is an edited transcript of some of the extremely rich lectures of Imām *Ṣafdar* on the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Imām al-Bukhārī.

Khazā'in al-Sunan (first impression: 1412 AH/1992 CE): This is an edited transcript of some of the extremely rich lectures of Imām *Ṣafdar* on the *Sunan* of Imām al-Tirmidhī.

Tawḍīḥ al-Marām fī Nuzūl al-Masīḥ 'Alayhi 'l-Salām (first impression: 1417 AH/1996 CE): In this final work of his, Imām *Ṣafdar* has established through irrefutable and authentic *aḥādīth* that the noble Prophet of Allāh, *Sayyiduna* 'Īsā ibn Maryam (may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon them both), was lifted alive to the heavens and will return to the world before the end of time. He will kill Dajjāl (the 'Anti-Christ') and will rule in accordance to the *Sharī'ah* of *Sayyiduna* Muḥammad (may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon them both) for forty years. This is the unanimously agreed belief of the Ahl al-Sunnah wa 'l-Jamā'ah. In this work Imām *Ṣafdar* has also rebutted and exposed the severe misguidance of those heretic sects that reject the life and descent of *Sayyiduna* 'Īsā ibn Maryam (may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon them both).

Apart from the above, Imām *Ṣafdar*'s published works include *Āyina-e-Muḥammadī* (first impression: 1365 AH/1945 CE), *Guldasta-e-Tawḥīd* (first impression: 1370 AH/1950 CE), *Ḥilyat al-Muslimīn* (*al-Liḥya fī Naẓar al-Dīn* - first impression: 1371 AH/1951 CE), *Chālīs Du'āyēn* (first impression: 1374 AH/1954 CE), *Hidāyat al-Murtāb fī Ṭarīq al-Ṣawāb* (*Rāh-e-Hidāyat* - first impression: 1378 AH/1957 CE), *Inkār-e- ḥadīth ke Natā'ij* (first impression: 1379 AH/1960 CE), *Mirzā'ī kā Janāzah aur Musalmān* (first impression: 1966 CE), *Tablīgh-e-Islām* (first impression: 1382 AH/1962 CE), *Ṭā'ifah-e-Manṣūrah* (first impression: 1382 AH/1962 CE), *'Īsā'iyyat ka Pas Manẓar* (first impression: 1384 AH/1962 CE), *Bāni-*

e-Dār al-'Ulūm Deoband (first impression: 1382 AH/1962 CE), *Bāb-e-Jannat - ba Jawāb-e-Rāh-e-Jannat* (first impression: 1383 AH/1962 CE), *Shauq-e-Jihād* (first impression: 1385 AH/1965 CE), *Tanqīd-e-Matīn bar Tafsīr-e-Na'īm al-Dīn* (first impression: 1387 AH/1967 CE).

Mawlānā 'Abd al-Ḥaqq Khān Bashīr's Urdu treatise may be consulted for a full list of the works of Imām *Ṣafdar*. In view of brevity, just the above synopses have been mentioned here in the hope that this will sufficiently serve as a sample.

Upholder of the *Dīn* and perfect spiritual mentor

Throughout his life, Imām *Ṣafdar* defended the Muslim *Ummah* and Islām on all fronts. In his autobiography, he gives an account of how when his beloved teacher *Shaykh al-Islām* Mawlānā Sayyid Ḥusayn Aḥmad Madani was arrested for a speech he gave in Murādābād, the students of the Dār al-'Ulūm at Deoband had organised several mass protest rallies, which had to be controlled by the army and police. In one of the last such rallies, the students appointed him as their protest leader.[26] During the struggle for freedom from British colonialism, he was an active member of the Jam'iyyat al-'Ulamā of India. After the formation of Pakistan, he vigorously campaigned for the implementation of the *Sharī'ah* within its realm. For his role in the campaign to officially declare the followers of Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad Qādiyāni's faith a non-Muslim minority in Pakistan, he was incarcerated for many months twice - in 1953 and then again in 1973 CE.[27] On an individual level, he mentored thousands of people who took the formal *bay'ah* of *taṣawwuf* at his blessed hands and guided them through the various stages of spiritual purification. He was a *khalīfah* of the great *Shaykh* Mawlānā Ḥusayn 'Ali.[28]

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[26] Mawlānā Muḥammad Sarfarāz Khān *Ṣafdar*, Autobiography: *Hum ne tamām 'umr guzāri hay is ṭarah*, in the *Monthly al-Sharī'ah*, special edition (Gujrānwāla, 2009).

[27] Mawlānā Dr. 'Abd al-Razzāq Iskandar, *Imām Ahl al-Sunnah, al-Muḥaddith al-Kabīr - Muḥammad Sarfarāz Khān Ṣafdar* (Arabic); Mawlānā Abu 'Ammār Zāhid al-Rāshidi, *Haḍrat Wālid-e-Muḥtaram se wābista chand yādēn*, in the *Monthly al-Sharī'ah*, special edition (Gujrānwāla, 2009).

[28] Born in the Miānwāli district of the Punjab province in 1283 AH (1866 CE), Shaykh Mawlānā Ḥusayn 'Alī ibn Ḥāfiẓ Miān Muḥammad ibn 'Abdillāh al-Ḥanafī al-Naqshbandī studied the major books of *ḥadīth* under the great Imām *Shaykh al-Mashāyikh* Mawlānā Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī in 1302 AH (1884 CE). He then studied *tafsīr* under Imām Mawlānā Maẓhar Nānotwī and philosophy and logic under Shaykh Mawlānā Aḥmad Ḥasan Kānpūrī. He took the *bay'ah* of *taṣawwuf* at the hands of Shaykh Khwāja Muḥammad 'Uthmān ibn 'Abdillāh al-Naqshbandī. After the demise of the Shaykh, he turned to Shaykh Khwāja Sirāj al-Dīn for continuation of his spiritual training in the Naqshbandī order, who granted him *khilāfah*. According to Shaykh Mawlānā 'Abd al-Ḥayy ibn Fakhr al-Dīn al-Ḥasanī, he was granted *khilāfah* by the former *shaykh*. Beside his mastery of *taṣawwuf*, Shaykh Mawlānā Ḥusayn 'Alī was also a master in

Exemplar of sincerity and humbleness

Despite being the ocean of knowledge and tower of piety that he was, Imām Mawlānā Muḥammad Sarfarāz Khān *Ṣafdar* was an exemplar of sincerity and humbleness. I can recall how, on a late afternoon during his visit to Karachi for medical treatment during Ṣafar 1423 AH (May 2002 CE), while we were seated in his blessed company in the front garden of Mawlānā Muftī Muḥammad Jamīl Khān *Shahīd*'s residence, Imām *Ṣafdar* had given all Madrasah students present in this exclusive *majlis* the opportunity to ask questions. One of my class fellows, a very promising student, asked a question about an often misunderstood and misinterpreted subtle practice of the *ṣūfis*, to which Imām *Ṣafdar* replied, "The people of Allāh (*ahl Allāh*) know the answer to this." It was as if he was saying that this is a question the answer to which only those close to Allāh know. I am not one of them.

In recognition of his sublime status in the Muslim *Ummah*, he was given the grand title of 'Imām Ahl al-Sunnah' (the Imām of the people of *Sunnah*) by the *'ulamā* of his time. He would often comment on this, saying, "I am the imām of a masjid in Gakhar Mandī (Gujrānwāla), which is called 'Masjid-e-Ahl-e-Sunnat wa 'l-Jamā'at', that is why I am called 'Imām Ahl al-Sunnah'."[29]

He had spent his entire life serving the *Dīn* of Allāh and the creation of Allāh, but when toward the end of his almost century-long life, he himself was desperately in need of service, he would dislike and refrain from accepting any form of service from others. Mawlānā Sa'īd Aḥmad Jalālpūrī recalls how he and others would witness Imām *Ṣafdar*, when he was so ill that he could barely rise without assistance, getting up during the night to go to the lavatory. He would not wake anyone from their sleep and would attempt to make his way to the lavatory with the support of the walls. He would dislike any stranger pressing or massaging his feet. He would not accept gifts except from those whom he

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the science of *tafsīr al-Qur'ān*. In his lectures, Imām *Ṣafdar* would often quote from his *shaykh*. He died during the month of Rajab in 1363 AH (1944 CE). ('Allāmah 'Abd al-Ḥayy ibn Fakhr al-Dīn al-Ḥasani, *al-I'lām bi man fi tārīkh al-Hind min al-A'lām* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1999) 8:1217, entry: 119; Ḥāfiẓ Muḥammad Akbar Shāh Bukhāri, *Akābir 'Ulamā-e-Deoband* (Lahore: Idārah-e-Islāmiyyāt, 1999), pp. 148; Mawlānā Ḥāfiẓ Muḥammad Yūsuf, *Ḥaḍrat Shaykh al-Ḥadīth ke asātidhah ka ijmāli ta'āruf*, in the *Monthly al-Sharī'ah*, special edition (Gujrānwāla, 2009).

[29] *Ibid*; Mawlānā Muḥammad Aslam Shaykhūpūrī, *Chand muntashir yādēn;* Mawlānā 'Abd al-Qayyūm Ḥaqqānī, *Wa mā kāna Qaysun halakah*, in the *Monthly al-Sharī'ah*, special edition (Gujrānwāla, 2009).

knew well and regarding whose income he knew there was no doubt of it being acquired through unlawful means.[30]
Professor Dr. ʿAlī Aṣghar Chishtī recalls how once, when Imām *Ṣafdar* was visiting their offices in Karachi, he and others tried to assist him in climbing the stairs. Imām *Ṣafdar* declined, saying, "Please do not be inconvenienced because of me. I can climb the stairs by myself." When he had sat down in the upstairs office, he said, "I am not as old as you people think I am." They said, "Ḥaḍrat, When Muftī sahib comes here, he has difficulty in climbing these stairs." He replied, "Muftī Maḥmūd is old, I am not."[31]

Like many others in high office, during his time in office as President of Pakistan, Rafīq Tārar was also an admirer of Imām *Ṣafdar*. He once sought permission to come and visit Imām *Ṣafdar*, but the latter asked him not to, explaining that if the President visited him, people would know that the President was an admirer of Imām *Ṣafdar*. They would then come to him with all forms of matters, good and bad, seeking his recommendation and good word to the President.[32]

"*From the cradle to the grave*" - Unquenchable thirst for knowledge

Writing whilst the funeral arrangements were being made, *Shaykh al-Ḥadīth* Mawlānā Zāhid al-Rāshidī writes about the inspirational academic aspect of his illustrious father's personality:

'My revered father Mawlānā Muḥammad Sarfarāz Khān *Ṣafdar* had been bedridden for the last eight or nine years. Despite this, by the grace of Allāh, his memory did not fail him and his academic interests remained the same till the end. His eyesight had deteriorated severely and he had trouble in recognising people, but if a person was introduced, he would recall everything regarding that person. He would then ask that person even the most minor things. I would generally have the opportunity to visit him for a brief while on Friday evenings. Whenever he felt better, he would ask for a book to be read to him. I would read any book of *ḥadīth* to him. I would always fear reading to him, as the slightest of errors would not pass unnoticed or unchecked. A few months prior to his demise he asked, "Would you happen to have a reliable

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[30] Mawlānā Saʿīd Aḥmad Jalālpūri, *Imām-e-Ahl-e-Sunnat ke ghayr maʿmūli awṣāf wa kamālāt*, in the *Monthly al-Sharīʿah*, special edition (Gujrānwāla, 2009).
[31] ʿAlī Aṣghar Chishtī, *Chand yādgār mulāqātēn*, in the *Monthly al-Sharīʿah*, special edition (Gujrānwāla, 2009).
[32] *Ibid.*

[Arabic] dictionary?" I asked, "What will you do with a dictionary in this condition?" He replied, "Sometimes the need for a dictionary arises." I purchased a dictionary and presented it to him and he was very pleased with it. On another occasion he asked, "Will *Al-Luʾluʾ wa ʾl-Marjān* be available in the bookshops?" I replied in the affirmative. I then purchased it for him.

Last month when I was setting off for my trip to the United Kingdom, I informed him that I intended to perform ʿumrah on the way back. He was pleased at hearing this, prayed for me and said, "I have heard that *Musnad Abī Yaʿlā* has now been published. If you are able to, could you get me a copy of it?" I searched for it in several bookshops in Makkah Mukarramah and Madīnah Munawwarah, but could not find it. On my way back I said to my host in Jeddah, Qāri Muḥammad Aslam Shehzād, my wife's brother-in-law, "I do not feel like returning home without the book." We both then visited the bookshops in Jeddah together. After visiting two or three bookshops, we managed to find it. I was overjoyed by this find, but Qāri sahib was happier than me. He prevented me from paying for it and asked that I present it to my revered father as a gift from him.

I returned home on Thursday and as per my weekly routine I visited my father on Friday. He was feeling very unwell [...]. When I showed him the book, he gestured that I place it where he had asked me to.

Only a few days ago, as per our routine, I and my brothers were by his bedside on Friday. He was feeling somewhat better. He asked me where such and such a verse was in the Holy Qurʾān. I told him where it was. I thought he would be enquiring about an issue related to that verse, but when he asked me a second question regarding it, I realised he was testing me. My younger brother, Qārin ʿAzīz al-Raḥmān, who resides in Jeddah, was also there. I pushed him in front of me and hid myself. He then underwent a test. He was asked about several verses and the verses preceding them. We were extremely happy seeing our father so well and in such a good mood.

During my visits, he would usually ask about the state of the nation. In recent days, he had been very concerned about the state of Swāt [in the Afghan-Pak frontier province]. He stayed abreast of newspapers, and he would often ask questions relating to news items. He would read my regular newspaper columns and would comment on some of their contents. I once wrote in one of my columns that the Noble Messenger of Allāh (may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) is an 'ideal' for his *Ummah*. The next time I visited him, he

asked me what the word 'ideal' meant. I replied that this was an approximate translation of the Arabic term *uswah ḥasanah*.

Once, while reading a *ḥadīth* to him, I got stuck on a word. I was surprised myself that this had happened when I had in fact previously read and taught the *ḥadīth* several times. When this happened, he told me what the word was and also explained the *ḥadīth* to me. Many a time, I have struggled to recall the precise wording of a *ḥadīth* and could not locate it in the books, but when I asked him he would tell me in which chapter of which book to look. I would then find it in that precise location. This is not from the days when he was well and healthy, but rather during the days when he was so ill that he could not turn on his side in bed himself. In such a condition, his memory remained so sharp that we would be left amazed by it.'[33]

Despite his immaculate and unparalleled proficiency in all the sciences of Islām, and despite having spent more than half a century teaching and serving Islām and the Muslims, Imām Mawlānā Muḥammad Sarfarāz Khān *Ṣafdar* would often express his sorrow at not having been able to teach to his heart's content. Mawlānā Muḥammad Aslam Shaykhūpūrī writes of how when he visited Imām *Ṣafdar* a year prior to his demise, he asked whether he had any unfulfilled wishes. Imām *Ṣafdar* replied that there were many such wishes. Upon Mawlānā Shaykhūpūrī's request to mention one such wish, Imām *Ṣafdar* stated that he had not had the opportunity to teach the primary level [small] books of the *Dars-e-Niẓāmī* course[34]. This was the unfulfilled wish and desire of a man who had spent half a century lecturing on the major books of *ḥadīth*, including the *Sunan* of Imām Abu ʿĪsā al-Tirmidhī and the *Jāmi'* of Imām Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī, and the text and *tafsīr* of the Holy Qur'ān to the *ʿulamā* tens of times. He was, without an iota of doubt, an embodiment of the *ḥadīth* of the blessed Messenger of Allāh (may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) narrated by Sayyidunā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī (may Allāh be pleased with him) and reported by Imām Abu ʿĪsā al-Tirmidhī, in which the blessed Messenger of Allāh (may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) said:

لن يشبع المؤمن من خير يسمعه حتى يكون منتهاه الجنة . (رواه الترمذي 2881 وقال: هذا حديث حسن غريب)

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[33] Mawlānā Zāhid al-Rāshidī, *Mere wālid, mere murabbī - Haḍrat Mawlānā Muḥammad Sarfarāz Khān Ṣafdar*, in the *Weekly Wazārat* (Lahore, 5-12 May 2009).

[34] Mawlānā Muḥammad Aslam Shaykhūpūrī, *Chand muntashir yādēn*, in the *Monthly al-Sharīʿah*, special edition (Gujrānwāla, 2009).

"A believer will never be content with [any amount of] good[35] that he hears until he reaches his goal and final destination of Paradise."[36]

This unquenchable thirst for knowledge and desire to serve Islām and the Muslims in such a selfless manner is only the lot of the true *ʿulamā* of the *ākhirah*, the men of Allāh, described by the blessed Messenger of Allāh (may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) as the "heirs of the Prophets", when he said:

إن العلماء ورثة الأنبياء، إن الأنبياء لم يورّثوا دينارا ولا درهما، إنما ورّثوا العلم، فمن أخذ به فقد أخذ بحظّ وافر.

(جزء من حديث رواه أبو داود 3641 والترمذي واللفظ له 2877 وابن حبّان في صحيحه 88 وغيرهم)

"Indeed the ʿulamā are the heirs of the Prophets, and indeed the Prophets do not leave behind a legacy of dīnārs and dirhams,[37] but they leave behind a legacy of knowledge. He who acquires it has indeed acquired a complete[38] portion."[39]

After describing the condition of Imām *Ṣafdar*'s thirst for knowledge, Mawlānā Muḥammad Aslam Shaykhūpūrī relates an incident that occurred only a few

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[35] ʿAllāmah Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Mubārakpūrī (d. 1353 AH/1934 CE), in his *Tuḥfat al-Aḥwadhī bi sharḥ Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī*, interprets the word 'good' in this *ḥadīth* as knowledge. Explaining this *ḥadīth*, Imām Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdillāh al-Ishbīlī (Ibn al-ʿArabī al-Mālikī – d. 543 AH/1148 CE) says in his *ʿĀriḍat al-Aḥwadhi bi sharḥ Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, no date) 10:157, "It has been reported in wisdom that there are two greedy ones who are never satiated – the seeker of knowledge and the seeker of this [material] world."

[36] Imām Abū ʿĪsā Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsā ibn al-Sawrah al-Tirmidhī (d. 279 AH/892 CE), *al-Jāmi' al-Kabīr* (*Sunan al-Tirmidhī*), ed. Shu'ayb al-Arna'ūṭ and Haytham ʿAbd al-Ghafūr (Damascus: Dār al-Risālat al-ʿĀlamiyyah, 2009), 4:620, *ḥadīth* 2881.

[37] That is, money or material wealth.

[38] The actual Arabic word used here by the blessed Messenger of Allāh (may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) is '*wāfir*', from the root *wafr*, *firah* or *wufūr*. It means abundance and plenty (see *Lisān al-ʿArab* and *al-Mu'jam al-Wasīṭ*). I have chosen to translate the word as 'complete', following the interpretation given by Imām ʿAllāmah Khalīl Aḥmad Sahāranpūrī (d. 1346 AH/1927 CE) in his *Badhl al-Majhūd fī ḥall Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, ʿAllāmah Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Mubārakpūrī (d. 1353 AH/1934 CE) in his *Tuḥfat al-Aḥwadhī bi sharḥ Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī*, Imām ʿAllāmah ʿAlī ibn Sulṭān Muḥammad al-Qāri (d. 1014 AH/1605 CE) in his *Mirqāt al-Mafātīḥ sharḥ Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ* and *Shaykh al-Ḥadīth* Mawlānā Naṣīr Aḥmad Khān (d. Ṣafar 1431 AH/Feb 2010 CE) of the Dār al-ʿUlūm at Deoband (India) in his *dars* of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.

[39] Imām Abū Dāwūd Sulaymān ibn al-Ash'ath ibn Isḥāq ibn Bashīr al-Azdī al-Sijistānī (d. 275 AH/888 CE), *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* with *Badhl al-Majhūd fī ḥall Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, ed. Taqi al-Dīn al-Nadwī (Beirut: Dār al-Bashā'ir al-Islāmiyyah, 2006), 11:373, *ḥadīth* 3641; Imām Abū ʿĪsā Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsā ibn al-Sawrah al-Tirmidhī (d. 279 AH/892 CE), *al-Jāmi' al-Kabīr* (*Sunan al-Tirmidhī*), ed. Shu'ayb al-Arna'ūṭ and Haytham ʿAbd al-Ghafūr (Damascus: Dār al-Risālat al-ʿĀlamiyyah, 2009), 4:617, *ḥadīth* 2877.

weeks prior to his demise. He says, 'Shaykh Muftī Muḥammad Rafī' Usmānī[40] had come to visit Imām *Ṣafdar*. After greeting him, the first thing Imām *Ṣafdar* asked him was, "The *shaykh al-ḥadīth* of Jāmi'ah Ashrafiyyah (Lahore), *Ṣūfī* Muḥammad Sarwar sahib has related such and such a *ḥadīth* from your revered father (Imām 'Allāmah Muftī Muḥammad Shafī'). I am looking for its reference. Could you please identify its source?"[41]

The condition of Imām *Ṣafdar* during his final days, described by his son *Shaykh al-Ḥadīth* Mawlānā Zāhid al-Rāshidī and Mawlānā Muḥammad Aslam Shaykhūpūrī, is reminiscent of the condition of the pious *'ulamā* of the early centuries such as Imām Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb al-Anṣārī, the senior student of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah al-Nu'mān al-Kūfī, and that of Imām Ibn Mālik, the grammarian (*naḥwī*) on their death beds.

A student of Imām Abū Yūsuf, al-Qāḍī Ibrāhīm ibn al-Jarrāḥ al-Kūfī al-Miṣrī, says:

'[Imām] Abū Yūsuf was ill. I went to visit him and found him unconscious. When he regained consciousness, he asked me, "O Ibrāhīm, What do you say regarding a certain issue in *fiqh*?" I said, "Even in such a condition?!" He replied, "That is not a problem at all. Let us discuss a matter of knowledge, perhaps someone will be relieved by it." He then asked, "O Ibrāhīm, What is better when pelting the pillars [of *jamarāt*] in Ḥajj – to pelt on foot or mounted on a beast?" I replied, "Mounted on a beast." He said, "Incorrect." I then said, "On foot." He again replied, "Incorrect." I said, "Please tell me. May Allāh be pleased with you." He said, "The pillar, after the pelting of which, one should stop and supplicate (say a *du'ā*) – it is best to pelt it on foot. As for the pillar, after the pelting of which, one should not supplicate – it is best to pelt it mounted on a beast." I then took leave from him. I had not even reached the door of his house when I heard the sound of people crying over him. He had died. May Allāh have mercy upon him.'[42]

It is said regarding Imām Ibn Mālik, the grammarian (*naḥwī*), author of the *Alfiyyah* in the science of *naḥw*, that he committed to memory several verses of

[40] President of the Jāmi'ah Dār al-'Ulūm in Karachi and grand muftī of Pakistan (see footnote 8).
[41] Mawlānā Muḥammad Aslam Shaykhūpūrī, *Chand muntashir yādēn*, in the *Monthly al-Sharī'ah*, special edition (Gujrānwāla, 2009).
[42] 'Allāmah 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghuddah, *Qīmat al-Zaman 'inda 'l-'Ulamā*, 8th edn (Beirut: Dār al-Bashā'ir al-Islāmiyyah, 1998), pp. 29.

poetry on the day he died. Some have specified that they were eight verses, communicated to him by his son.[43]

Father of servants of the Book of Allāh

Allāh had blessed Imām Mawlānā Muḥammad Sarfarāz Khān *Ṣafdar* with many children, all of whom are *ḥuffāẓ*[44] of the Holy Qur'ān. Most of his children are also gifted *'ulamā*, serving the *Dīn* in various capacities.[45] One of his daughters committed the Holy Qur'ān to memory at the age of forty.[46] Imām *Ṣafdar* was not himself a *ḥāfiẓ* of the Holy Qur'ān, but his recollection of passages and verses, particularly those pertaining to any aspect of the *Sharī'ah*, was incredible. *Shaykh al-Ḥadīth* Mawlānā Zāhid al-Rāshidī recalls how once, during the early days of his career, his father, Imām *Ṣafdar*, had to painfully explain to his congregation on the first night of *Ramaḍān* that due to not being able to find a *ḥāfiẓ* of the Holy Qur'ān he would have to lead the *tarāwīḥ* prayer with the shorter *sūrat*s of the Holy Qur'ān. He says that later, there came a time during the life of his father when he and his brothers once counted the number of *ḥuffāẓ* amongst the offspring of Imām Mawlānā *Ṣafdar*. They came to a total of more than forty.[47]

As for his students, it is estimated that Imām Mawlānā *Ṣafdar* had taught approximately 30,000 students either directly or indirectly throughout his academic life.[48]

Journey to the Most Gracious

On the night of 9th Jumādā 'l-Ūlā 1430 AH, corresponding to 5th May 2009, at approximately 1 o'clock in the morning[49] the great *imām*, the remnant of the *Salaf*, Imām Mawlānā Muḥammad Sarfarāz Khān *Ṣafdar* departed from this

[43] *Ibid*, pp. 71.
[44] Plural of *ḥāfiẓ*.
[45] Dr. Ḥāfiẓ Maḥmūd Akhtar, *Ēk 'ahd sāz shakhsiyyat*, in the *Monthly al-Sharī'ah*, special edition (Gujrānwāla, 2009).
[46] Mawlānā Muḥammad Aslam Shaykhūpūrī, *Chand muntashir yādēn*, in the *Monthly al-Sharī'ah*, special edition (Gujrānwāla, 2009).
[47] Mawlānā Abu 'Ammār Zāhid al-Rāshidi, *Ḥaḍrat Wālid-e-Muḥtaram se wābista chand yādēn*, in the *Monthly al-Sharī'ah*, special edition (Gujrānwāla, 2009).
[48] Mawlānā Muḥammad 'Īsā Manṣūrī, *Imām-e-Ahl-e-Sunnat ki Riḥlat*, in the *Monthly al-Sharī'ah*, special edition (Gujrānwāla, 2009).
[49] Mawlānā Abū 'Ammār Zāhid al-Rāshidī, *Ḥaḍrat Wālid-e-Muḥtaram se wābista chand yādēn*, in the *Monthly al-Sharī'ah*, special edition (Gujrānwāla, 2009).

world. It was not merely the departure of a man, but the departure of a true exemplar of piety, fear of Allāh, sincerity, steadfastness, contentment, simplicity, humbleness, affection, compassion, sympathy, empathy, service to the *Dīn* of Allāh and service to the creation of Allāh. It was the departure of a man the likes of whom the world seldom witnesses - one who will, perhaps, never be replaced. In the words of Shaykh Muftī Muḥammad Rafīʿ Usmānī, "The passing of our revered teacher, the imām of the Ahl al-Sunnah, Ḥaḍrat Mawlānā Muḥammad Sarfarāz Khān *Ṣafdar* (may Allāh have mercy upon him), is indeed a great tragedy for the world of Islāmic academia. The departure of this sign of the great *ʿulamā* of Deoband (*Akābir*) is indeed a terrible loss."[50]

The bier carrying Imām Mawlānā Muḥammad Sarfarāz Khān *Ṣafdar* was brought to the D.C. High School of Gakhar (Gujrānwāla) in the morning. The area was covered by a sea of people. According to some reports, no less than a hundred thousand people participated in his funeral prayer.[51]

May Allāh, Most Gracious, have mercy on his soul, reward him with the best of rewards and grant him entrance to the most magnificent garden of Paradise, for, indeed, he lived a life of abstinence, shunning all worldly comforts and pleasures, sacrificing his almost century-long life for Islām and the Muslims.

مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللهَ عَلَيْهِ فَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ قَضَى نَحْبَهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَنْتَظِرُ وَمَا بَدَّلُوا تَبْدِيلا.

Among the Believers are men who have been true to their covenant with Allāh; of them some have completed their vow (by sacrificing their lives in the way of Allāh), and some (still) wait, but they have never changed (their determination) in the least. (al-Qurʾān 33:23)

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50 Shaykh Muftī Muḥammad Rafīʿ Usmānī, letter of condolence published in the *Monthly al-Sharīʿah*, special edition (Gujrānwāla, 2009).

51 Mawlānā ʿAbd al-Qayyūm Ḥaqqānī, *Wa mā kāna Qaysun halakah*, in the *Monthly al-Sharīʿah*, special edition (Gujrānwāla, 2009).

The Dār al-hadīth building, Dār al-'Ulūm at Deoband (India)

Reading the life of 'Allāmah Muḥammad Sarfarāz Khān *Ṣafdar* reminds one of those *'ulamā* of a bygone era. As a meticulous researcher, expert in *ḥadīth* and *tafsīr*, prolific writer and *ṣūfī shaykh* in the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqah*, 'Allāmah *Ṣafdar* was at the forefront of serving Islām, piety, research and defending the Ahl al-Sunnah. Living up to the ripe-old age of 95, 'Allāmah *Ṣafdar* authored around 160 books, second most among Deobandī *'ulamā* after *Ḥakīm al-Ummah* Mawlānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānawī. His writings have enjoyed widespread acceptance among leading scholars of South Asia, so much so that even learned men of knowledge such as Muftī Muḥammad Taqī Usmānī take pride in possessing all his works.

A close confidant of many leading *'ulamā* in Pakistan, 'Allāmah *Ṣafdar* was the embodiment of a rare breed of scholar-cum-ṣūfī — a notable trait among those affiliated with the Deobandī *maslak* — and was *bay'ah* to *Shaykh al-Qur'ān* Mawlānā Husayn 'Alī, a student of *Imām Rabbānī* Mawlānā Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī.

This biography is a rare treat for those wanting to read about a genre of Islāmic scholars whose life stories are still largely untold in the English medium. Mawlānā Abu 'Āsim Badrul Islām, himself a *murīd* of the late 'Allāmah, has taken the time to write this beautiful and heartwarming short biography that readers will *inshā Allāh* take delight to absorb themselves in.

Fig & Olive Press